

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 GAC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 RSR-01 IO-12 /106 W
----- 090647

R 171400 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4588

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS : PINS/ EI

SUBJECT: MACSTIOFAIN RELEASED

BEGIN SUMMARY: MACSTIOFAIN' S RELEASE FROM DETENTION
DOES NOT INDICATED ANY SOFTENING OF GOI POLICY TOWARDS
PROVOS. ON CONTRARY, NEW GOVT SEEMS EAGER FOR
CONFRONTATIONS WITH IRA IN AREAS CONSIDERED MEANINGFUL.
END SUMMARY.

1. SEAN MACSTIOFAIN , EX- CHIEF OF STAFF OF PROVISIONAL
IRA, WAS RELEASED FROM MILITARY DETENTION CENTER
APRIL 16 . HE HAD SERVED SIX - MONTH SENTENCE, LESS FIVE
WEEKS FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR. DURING BACKGROUND
BRIEFINGS TO PRESS, GOI MADE CLEAR THAT IT DID NOT PLAN
TO REARREST MACSTIOFAIN. IN IMPROMPTU PRESS CONFERENCE
JUST AFTER RELEASE, HE REFRAINED FROM ANY COMMENT THAT
COULD GET HIM BACK IN JAIL, BUT SAID THAT LASTING PEACE
WOULD ONLY COME WHEN BRITISH SET DATE FOR COMPLETE
WITHDRAWAL FROM IRELAND. HE SEEMED VISIBLY WEAK,
PRESUMABLY FROM EFFECTS OF LONG HUNGER STRIKE. (BUT
HE OBSERVED THAT IRISH JAILS HAVE EVEN WORSE FOOD THAN
ENGLISH.) WHILE HIS CURRENT STANDING IN IRA IS NOT
KNOWN, TRADITIONAL PROVO POLICY IS TO REDUCE ALL MEMBERS
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TO RANKS AUTOMATICALLY WHEN JAILED.

2. ON APRIL 14, ARMED MEN ROBBED CASH FROM PUB OWNED BY MINISTER OF DEFENSE DONEGAN. PUB WAS NEAR NI BORDR, AND ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, RAIDERS CAME IN CAR WITH NI REGISTRATION. DONEGAN HAD PLAYED CONSPICUOUS ROLE IN SEIZURE OF SMUGGLED ARMS ON "CLAUDIA," FOLLOWING WITH PRESS CONFERENCE AIMED AT REINFORCING IRELAND'S LAW-AND-ORDER IMAGE. COINCIDENCE BETWEEN THIS ROLE AND RAID SEEMS REMARKABLE. REPUBLICAN EXTREMISTS ARE INEVITABLY SUSPECT.

3. ON APRIL 13, JUSTICE MINISTER COONEY GAVE SPEECH STRONGLY ATTACKING IRA. HE SAID THAT GOI WOULD NOT TOLERATE TWO ARMIES OPERATING IN REPUBLIC. FURTHER, "PEOPLE WHO ARE ALLEGEDLY FIGHTING FOR THE CAUSE OF UNITY MUST LEARN THAT UNITY CANNOT BE ACHIEVED BY FIGHTING AND BOMBING." COONEY THEN HINTED AT NEW MEASURES AGAINST IRA, AND HE HAS REINFORCED THESE HINTS IN BACKGROUNDEERS TO PRESS. NEWSPAPERS THUS EXPECT NEW ANTI-IRA MEASURES TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON AND PREDICT THAT GOVT WILL MAKE MORE USE OF EXISTING POWERS RATHER THAN SEEKING ADDITIONAL LEGISLATION. THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH STANDING VIEW OF FINE GAEL AND LABOR-- WHEN IN OPPOSITION-- THAT PREVIOUS GOVT WAS NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ALL MEASURES AT ITS DISPOSAL.

4. THERE APPEARS TO BE WIDESPREAD SUPPORT IN PRESS AND PUBLIC FOR NEW GOVT'S STRONG ANTI-EXTREMIST STANCE. AT SAME TIME, THERE IS STILL MUCH INTEREST IN POSSIBILITY OF LEGALIZING PROVO SINN FEIN SO THAT IT CAN CONTEST NI ELECTIONS. PRESS COMMENTARY ON SUBJECT, HOWEVER, IS BALANCED, WITH EDITORIALS RECOGNIZING DIFFICULTIES OF LEGALIZING SINN FEIN WHILE IRA IS STILL SHOOTING.

5. COMMENT: GIVEN REMAINDER OF ATMOSPHERICS NOTED ABOVE, IT IS CLEAR THAT MACSTIOFAIN'S RELEASE DOES NOT INDICATE ANY SOFTENING OF GOI LINE TOWARD PROVOS. WE SEE NO CHANGE IN CAREFULLY CONSIDERED CARROT-AND-STICK POLICY REPORTED DUBLIN 501. GOVT LIKES TO ACT, HOWEVER, ON SOUND LEGAL GROUNDS, AND TO AVOID MEASURES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT COME ACROSS ONLY AS PETTY HARASSMENT.

MACSTIOFAIN'S REARREST WOULD HAVE DRAWN CRITICISM ON
CIVIL- RIGHTS GROUNDS, EVEN FROM THOSE WHO OPPOSE WHAT
HE STANDS FOR. WE EXPECT SEE GOI SEIZE EVERY
OPPORTUNITY FOR FURTHER TIGHTENING IN AREAS CONSIDERED
MEANINGFUL.
MOORE

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973DUBLIN00513
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: DUBLIN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730445/aaaairor.tel
Line Count: 125
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Aug-2001 by worrelsw>; APPROVED <24-Aug-2001 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 980123
Subject: MACSTIOFAIN RELEASED
TAGS: PINS, EI, n/a
To: BELFAST
EUR
LONDON
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005